United Nations S/PV.5399

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5399th meeting

Wednesday, 29 March 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Mayoral	(Argentina)
Members:	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	Congo	Mr. Makayat-Safouesse
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Nana Effah-Apenteng
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Mr. De Rivero
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Mr. Bolton

Agenda

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire

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06-28864 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 and with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, the Council has agreed to extend an invitation to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, His Excellency Mr. Youssouf Bakayoko.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Bakayoko (Côte d'Ivoire) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Youssouf Bakayoko.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Youssouf Bakayoko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire.

I now give him the floor.

Mr. Bakayoko (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I should like, first of all, to thank you, Mr. President, and members of the Council, for having invited me to participate in this Security Council meeting. It is a great honour and a privilege, which I greatly appreciate. I would also like to convey the greetings of the people, the head of State and the Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire, and to express their appreciation for the interest that the Council has always shown in Côte d'Ivoire. I am particularly pleased to express my gratitude for the support that the Council has been providing for Charles Konan Banny since the formation of his Government on 28 December 2005.

Today's meeting is one of a number of timely initiatives that the Council has taken in support of Côte d'Ivoire and of the Ivorian people since the crisis erupted on 19 September 2002. We would like to thank the Council for that. I would also like to convey the thanks and sincere appreciation of Côte d'Ivoire to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for all that he is doing to promote the return of peace in Côte d'Ivoire.

Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1633 (2005), which resulted in the formation of the Government led by Mr. Konan Banny, Côte d'Ivoire has entered a new era, which has allowed the peace and reconciliation process to develop significantly. In spite of a number of obstacles, which were quickly overcome by the Government — in particular the unfortunate events that took place in mid-January — the general situation with regard to the process is satisfactory.

Those events, which were resolutely condemned by the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and by the Secretary-General himself, brought home to us, like an electric shock, the fragile nature of the peace and reconciliation process in Côte d'Ivoire and the importance for all of us to firmly support, with strong measures and actions, the Government's efforts to move beyond the crisis and to implement the road map developed by the International Working Group.

In this context, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the fact that calm has been restored, following the vigorous actions taken by the Council on the day after the events of January against those whom it deemed responsible for stymieing the national peace and reconciliation process.

In particular, from 9 to 11 February, at Yamoussoukro, a Government seminar was held to define the modalities for the implementation of the road map. A round table was also organized on 25 February at Yamoussoukro, with the four major Ivorian political leaders, Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, Mr. Henri Konan Bédié, Mr. Alassane Ouattara and Mr. Guillaume Soro.

The meeting of the four leaders — the first on Ivorian soil since the outbreak of the crisis — provided them with an opportunity to take up with the Prime Minister fundamental questions that were of concern to them, as well as to take a number of decisions.

Regarding resolution 1633 (2005) and the Côte d'Ivoire Constitution, they reaffirmed that the Constitution and the resolution were not incompatible, and called on the head of State and the Prime Minister to consult at the earliest opportunity with a view to finding appropriate solutions to potential conflicts that could develop between the two texts relating to the execution of their respective tasks. They admitted that it would be possible, if need be, to convene a round table of a similar type.

With respect to the dismantling of the militias and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, they agreed that it was necessary to update the timetable and to immediately restart the dialogue between the heads of the Forces de défence et de securité and of the Forces nouvelles, and decided that those two leaders would discuss all military questions with a view to moving beyond the crisis.

With regard to identification and elections, the participants welcomed the fact that it is technically possible to simultaneously conduct operations for voter identification and enumeration, and called on the Government to make use of foreign assistance for a large-scale and equitable identification operation and to ensure that all the people will be able to exercise their constitutional right to vote.

With respect to Radiodiffusion Télévision Ivoirienne, the four leaders noted the provisions made by the Government to ensure that the entire country would be covered by its broadcasts in order to spread the message of peace and reconciliation. They called upon the various political leaders to ensure that the newspapers that share their views would be part of the peace process and that they would avoid doing anything to jeopardize it.

With respect to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), the leaders took note of the election of the Bureau and of the arbitration of the High Representative of the United Nations for elections in Côte d'Ivoire. They decided, however, to establish a fourth vice-presidential post for the Front populaire ivoirienne — the party in power — to establish balanced representation of the existing political forces.

They also called on the Prime Minister to convene, over the following few days, the Bureau of the Independent Electoral Commission, the signatories of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement and all interested parties so as to determine, together with the United Nations High Representative for elections in Côte d'Ivoire, the powers of the members of the Bureau and the operating rules of the IEC so that the elections could be organized in a fair, transparent and credible manner.

On the code of conduct, the four leaders agreed that they needed to get together frequently for exchanges on the peace process and to ensure that political life would be conducted in a calm environment, with respect for the values of fraternity and democracy.

As can be seen, the two meetings held in Yamoussoukro, particularly that of the four political leaders, enabled the Prime Minister, working together — indeed, in tandem — with the head of State, to put the peace and reconciliation process back in the hands of the Ivorian people and to bring the major leaders together to make a firm commitment to move the country out of crisis and to make that process irreversible.

Those two meetings also enabled the determination of the implementation modalities of Security Council resolution 1633 (2005) and of the International Working Group road map, and to create the climate and necessary political commitment for their implementation.

Positive results were seen immediately. They included the fact that, on 7 March, the Bureau of the Independent Electoral Commission — the main engine of the electoral machine — began its work after a number of months of uncertainty.

The installation of the IEC was perceived by the political parties as signalling the beginning of their political activities in the run-up to the elections of October 2006. As a result, important meetings have been held this month among the major opposition political policies, in particular the Rassemblement des Républicains, the Parti démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire-Rassemblement démocratique africain and the President's group. Important statements came out of these meetings which for the most part translate the determination of leaders to work in a new spirit that has been seen since the Yamoussoukro meeting.

To these positive actions we could add the return to Abidjan on 14 March 2006 of Mr. Soro, the Secretary-General of the Forces nouvelles, after seventeen months of absence from the city. Mr. Soro's presence in Abidjan now — which itself was preceded by the return from exile of opposition leaders Messrs. Henri Konan Bédié and Alassane Ouattara — provides sufficient evidence that the wall of mistrust that had characterized political life in Côte d'Ivoire is finally being broken.

With respect to identification and the electoral process, the national working group studying the matter presented its report to the Government on

Thursday, 2 March. The conclusions and recommendations will be made available to the IEC. On this question, I would like to affirm that the Government has already put in place the electoral process and identification. The two operations will be done simultaneously, as was decided at the Yamoussoukro Summit.

This new spirit that has emerged from the Yamoussoukro Summit and that has now provided new hope to all Ivorians has also made it possible from an administrative point of view to partially begin the process to redeploy the central administration in the regions under the control of the Forces nouvelles in the areas of national education and higher education. Thus it has been possible to organize school examinations, which we have not been able to do for more than three years in the regions controlled by the Forces nouvelles. Furthermore, the University of Bouaké, the headquarters of the Forces nouvelles, was officially reopened yesterday, 28 March.

The progress in these different areas, in our opinion, must become irreversible, and therefore we have to consolidate this climate of trust. In this respect, security matters must be settled as a matter of priority and must be accorded the utmost attention. One of the elements that must contribute to improving the security situation remains the living and working conditions of soldiers in the national army. Thus the Government launched a programme to restore the barracks on 21 February. Through this important project, the Government aims to create a more disciplined and more professional army, provided with modern infrastructure and equipment.

From the point of view of humanitarian assistance, on behalf of the Ivorian Government I would like to express our gratitude to the United Nations system for the assistance provided to the population heavily affected by the crisis that my country has been experiencing since September 2002. Humanitarian agencies, though they suffered from the events of 15, 16 and 17 January 2006, did not suspend their action on the ground. This concern, which is at the very heart of humanitarian action, is to be commended, and I would like to do so here.

The Ivorian Government, in order to mark its support for this action and its support for all agencies, made a statement in which it officially condemned what happened and which did not spare the Ivorian structures that cooperate with these agencies. Furthermore, it dispatched the Minister for Defence to the field in order to take stronger security measures.

Moreover, an interministerial commission, including the humanitarian agencies, is being set up. It will be a framework for the operational coordination of humanitarian action on a national scale. In this regard, the Prime Minister has just appointed a Special Counsellor for Humanitarian Action. In addition, the local authorities of the western part of Côte d'Ivoire have undertaken public awareness measures so that every citizen can understand the need for national solidarity as well as the usefulness of the presence of the international community alongside Côte d'Ivoire.

After several years of hesitation, of turbulence and sometimes of violence, the peace and reconciliation process is now taking a positive turn that we must all welcome and encourage.

I would like to thank once again all the heads of State who have been involved personally and who are working with us for the return of peace in Côte d'Ivoire. I also thank Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and his colleagues, including his Special Representative, Mr. Pierre Schori, and his team, as well as the soldiers of Operation Licorne and the French forces, for the efforts that they are continuing to make to permanently restore peace, reconciliation and stability in Côte d'Ivoire.

Though we should be pleased with the positive developments in the political situation in Côte d'Ivoire and should celebrate it, we must recognize that enormous tasks fall upon the Government through the road map and call for great vigilance as well as a stepping up of efforts so that these tasks will be completed.

In particular, we have to work in the following areas: financing the electoral process at all stages; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; strengthening security throughout the territory to guarantee safety for all voters; and resolving humanitarian problems and supporting human rights. In addition, we must make concerted efforts to strengthen the capacities of judicial institutions with a view to ensuring the rule of law throughout the country after three years of war, and provide support for the State's economy and finances in order to reduce the high unemployment rate among young people and to carry out the return of refugees and displaced persons.

There are still storms along the path that will lead us to an ultimate solution, but we have to weather those storms in order to be able to organize undisputed general elections, which are the only way out of this crisis. In this respect, the Government strongly wishes that Mr. Antonio Monteiro's successor as High Representative of the United Nations for elections in Côte d'Ivoire can be appointed as soon as possible.

In particular, when it comes to strengthening security throughout the entire national territory, I would like to underscore that this point is the greatest concern of all Ivorians and therefore of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire. Indeed, not only do we have to guarantee security in Abidjan, but also in the interior of the country, especially in the west.

This region, as the Council knows, shares a border with the Republic of Liberia, which shares many ethnic and cultural similarities with the peoples of West Africa. Providing good security in that part of Côte d'Ivoire means providing greater security for Liberia and strengthening the democratic process in that country.

For all of these reasons, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire strongly supports the Secretary-General's proposal to strengthen the number of Blue Helmets in Côte d'Ivoire. I would like to ask you to support this proposal and to consider it positively.

I am grateful for all that you have been able to do for Côte d'Ivoire since the outbreak of the crisis. I am also aware of the fact that it is primarily up to us Ivorians to do as much as we can to help our country emerge from this crisis. We are determined to achieve this, of course, with your support. Let us therefore work together for the return of peace in Côte d'Ivoire so that no one and nothing can make us retreat.

This is the place to invite all international institutions and the different development partners to respect their commitments within the framework of the process of recovery and reconstruction of Côte d'Ivoire, as recommended in the different agreements on the Ivorian crisis, including the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement.

I thank the members of the Security Council for the welcome and the attention that they have kindly given to me. I thank them for their attention to the message that I have just delivered on behalf of the people and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Security Council, I wish to thank His Excellency Mr. Youssouf Bakayoko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, for his statement.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.